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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the third session of the Conference of the Parties, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD was requested by decision 17/COP.3 to report on the implementation of that decision to the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 4). He was also requested, *inter alia*:

(a) To further enhance the collaboration between the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), while fully integrating the Global Mechanism;

(b) To continue to take steps to implement the memoranda of understanding (MOU), signed with other secretariats and institutions, and to develop similar MOU with other institutional partners;

(c) To continue his consultations with the executive secretaries of other relevant conventions, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, on arrangements for liaison modalities at the Headquarters of the United Nations, with which they are institutionally linked, or with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and/or any other relevant location;

(d) To cooperate with UNEP and the executive secretaries of other relevant conventions, particularly the UNFCCC, the CBD and the Ramsar Convention, in facilitating the exchange of scientific and technical information and experience in order to enhance the linkages among various scientific bodies and promote efficiency in the reporting requirements of Parties under relevant conventions;

(e) To give special attention at the next Conference of the Parties to the CBD and the UNFCCC, which have on their respective agendas a proposal for a work programme on dryland biodiversity and a discussion on issues related to land use, land use change and forestry.

2. Accordingly the Executive Secretary presented, under agenda item 10, document ICCD/COP(4)/6 on collaboration and synergies among the Rio conventions for the implementation of the UNCCD. Document ICCD/COP(5)/6 presents the latest developments in the field of collaboration and synergies as well as the most recent relevant initiatives taken and results achieved in that field with other conventions and relevant institutions.

II. COLLABORATION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS

A. Convention on Biological Diversity

3. Following the decision of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD on the elaboration of a joint work programme between the UNCCD and the CBD, consultations on the development of the joint work programme were further developed. The UNCCD and the CBD secretariats constituted a contact group specifically conceived for addressing this issue. The contact group held its first meeting in Bonn, Germany in April-May 2001 with a view to advising the CBD and UNCCD on how to advance the implementation of the joint work programme.

4. Through this joint work programme, the secretariats of the CBD and UNCCD agreed to encourage the strengthening, enactment and coordination of policies and instruments that will promote the development of synergistic and complementary approaches in the implementation of the environmental conventions at the country level through, *inter alia*, demonstrable cases of convergence of objectives. The CBD and UNCCD will also encourage and support the development of policies promoting participatory decision-making practices, as well as the best mix of scientific and traditional knowledge, in the sustainable and multiple use of the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, as well as the diversification of means of production.

5. The contact group also agreed that the overall aim of the programme of work should be the promotion of the common objectives of both conventions in dry and sub-humid lands. Accordingly the elaboration and implementation of the programme of work should:

(a) Build upon existing knowledge and ongoing activities and management practices, and promote a concerted response to fill knowledge gaps while supporting best management practices through partnership among countries and institutions;

(b) Ensure harmony with the other relevant thematic programmes of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the work on cross-cutting issues;

(c) Promote synergy and coordination, and avoid unnecessary duplication, between related conventions, particularly the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the programmes of various international organizations, while respecting the mandates and existing programmes of work of each organization and the intergovernmental authority of the respective governing bodies;

(d) Promote effective stakeholder participation, including the identification of priorities, in planning, in research and in monitoring and evaluating research;

(e) Respond to national priorities through the implementation of specific activities in a flexible and demand-driven manner;

(f) Support the development of national strategies and programmes and promote the integration of biological-diversity concerns in sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies, in furtherance of Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and in seeking harmonization and avoiding duplication when undertaking activities relevant to other related conventions, in particular the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

6. The programme of work is divided in two parts, "Assessments" and "Targeted actions in response to identified needs", to be implemented in parallel. Knowledge gained through the assessments will help guide the responses needed, while lessons learned from activities will feed back into the assessments. The programme will also endeavour to assemble and analyse information on the state of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and the pressures on it, to disseminate existing knowledge and best practices, and to fill knowledge gaps, in order to determine adequate activities.

7. Ecosystems of dry and sub-humid lands tend to be naturally highly dynamic systems. Assessment of the status and trends of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands is therefore particularly challenging. A better understanding of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, its dynamics, its socio-economic value and the consequences of its loss and change, is needed. This also includes the merits of short-term adaptive management practices compared with long-term management planning.

8. This should not, however, be seen as a prerequisite for targeted actions for the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands. Indeed, lessons learned from practices, including indigenous and local community practices, contribute to the knowledge base. Since water constraints are a defining characteristic of dry and sub-humid lands, effective water management strategies underpin their successful management. This requires an appropriate balance between the immediate water requirements of humans and their livestock and crops, and water required to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

9. The joint programme of work is also based on the identification of a range of activities considered priority ones. The contact group has accordingly listed some of these activities as follows:

Activity 1. Assessment of the status and trends of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, including landraces, and the effectiveness of conservation measures.

Activity 2. Identification of specific areas within dry and sub-humid lands of particular value for biological diversity and/or under particular threat, such as, inter alia, endemic species and low-lying wetlands, with reference to the criteria in Annex I to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Activity 3. Further development of indicators of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and its loss, for the various ecosystem types, for use in the assessment of the status and trends of this biological diversity.

Activity 4. Building knowledge on ecological, physical and social processes that affect the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, especially ecosystem structure and functioning (e.g., grazing, droughts, floods, fires, tourism, agricultural conversion or abandonment).

Activity 5. Identification of the local and global benefits, including soil and water conservation, derived from the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, assessment of the socio-economic impact of its loss, and the undertaking of studies on the interrelationship between biodiversity and poverty, including analysis of: (i) the benefits from biodiversity for poverty alleviation, and (ii) the impact of biodiversity conservation on the poorest.

Activity 6. Identification and dissemination of best management practices, including the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities, that can be broadly applied, consistent with the programme of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8(j) and related provisions.

Activity 7. Promotion of specific measures for the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands through:

(a) The use and the establishment of additional protected areas and the development of further specific measures for the conservation of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, including the strengthening of measures in existing protected areas, investment in the development and promotion of sustainable livelihoods, including alternative livelihoods, and conservation measures;

(b) The rehabilitation or restoration of the biological diversity of degraded dry and sub-humid lands, with the associated benefits arising thereof, such as soil and water conservation;

(c) The management of invasive alien species;

(d) The sustainable management of dry and sub-humid land production systems;

(e) The appropriate management, and sustainable use of, water resources;

(f) Where necessary, the conservation *in situ* as well as *ex situ*, as a complement to the latter, of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, taking due account of better understanding of climate variability in developing effective *in situ* biological conservation strategies;

(g) The economic valuation of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, as well as the development and use of economic instruments and the promotion of the introduction of adaptive technologies which enhance the productivity of dry and sub-humid lands ecosystems;

(h) The sustainable use or husbandry of plant and animal biomass, through adaptive management, bearing in mind potential population fluctuations in dry and sub-humid lands, and the support by Parties of national policies, legislation and land-use practices which promote effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable use;

(i) The establishment and promotion of training, education and public awareness;

(j) The facilitation and improvement of the availability, accessibility and exchange of information on sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands;

(k) The establishment and promotion of research and development programmes with a focus on, *inter alia*, building local capacity for the effective conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands;

(l) Cooperation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species with regard to, *inter alia*, integrated catchment management incorporating wetlands ecosystems as integral parts of dry and sub-humid lands, and the creation of migratory-species corridors across dry and sub-humid lands during seasonal periods, as well as cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) with regard to rare and endangered species in dry and sub-humid lands;

(m) Cooperation with all relevant conventions, in particular with the Convention to Combat Desertification, with respect to, *inter alia*, the sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, the application of the ecosystem approach, and assessment of the status and trends of this biological diversity as well as its threats.

Activity 8. Promotion of responsible resource management, at appropriate levels, applying the ecosystem approach, through an enabling policy environment, including, *inter alia*:

(a) Strengthening of appropriate local institutional structures for resource management, supporting indigenous and local techniques of resource use which enable conservation and sustainable use in the long term, and/or combining appropriate existing institutions and techniques with innovative approaches to enable synergies;

(b) Decentralization of management to the lowest level, as appropriate, keeping in mind the need for common resource management and with due consideration for, *inter alia*, involving indigenous and local communities in planning and managing projects;

(c) Creating or strengthening appropriate institutions for land tenure and conflict resolution;

(d) Encouraging bilateral and subregional cooperation to address transboundary issues (such as facilitating access to transboundary rangelands, as appropriate, and in accordance with national legislation and international agreements);

(e) Harmonizing sectoral policies and instruments to promote the conservation and the sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, including, *inter alia*, by taking advantage of existing national action programmes under the Convention to Combat Desertification frameworks at the country level, as well as, as appropriate, other existing and relevant sectoral plans and policies.

Activity 9. Support for sustainable livelihoods through, *inter alia*:

(a) Diversifying sources of income to reduce negative pressures on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands;

(b) Promoting sustainable harvesting including of wildlife, as well as ranching, including game-ranching;

(c) Exploring innovative sustainable uses of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands for local income generation, and promoting their wider application;

(d) Developing markets for products derived from the sustainable use of the biological diversity in dry and sub-humid lands, adding value to harvested produce;

(e) Establishing mechanisms and frameworks for promoting fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of the genetic resources of dry and sub-humid lands, including bioprospecting.

10. These activities are to be carried out through a consolidation of information from various ongoing sources, including those under other international conventions, the Global Observing Systems, and other programmes. This process would draw upon the ongoing work of these existing programmes, with additional catalytic activities, such as workshops, further use of the clearing-house mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and partnerships between organizations, including, where appropriate, joint activities of the secretariats of the conventions.

11. It was also agreed that in carrying out these activities, due attention would be paid to other fundamental aspects, such as:

(a) Targeted research, including existing programmes of international and national research centres and research systems and other relevant international or regional programmes, with additional funding for priority work needed to overcome barriers to the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands;

(b) Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary case studies on management practices, carried out primarily by national and regional institutions, including civil-society organizations and research institutions, with support from international organizations for catalyzing the preparation of studies, mobilizing funds, disseminating results, and facilitating feedback and lessons learned to case study providers and policy makers. New resources could be required for the promotion of such studies, to analyse the results and to provide necessary capacity-building and human-resource development;

(c) Dissemination of information and capacity-building required by assessment activities;

(d) Capacity-building, particularly at the national and local levels, as well as investment in the development and promotion of sustainable livelihoods, including alternative livelihoods, and conservation measures, through participatory and bottom-up processes, with funding from bilateral and multilateral sources, and catalytic support from international organizations;

(e) Establishment of an international network of designated demonstration sites to facilitate the sharing of information and experience in implementing the programme of work, as well as to demonstrate and to promote conservation and sustainable use integration in the context of dry and sub-humid lands;

(f) Case studies on the successful management of dry and sub-humid lands which could be disseminated through, inter alia, the clearing house mechanism;

(g) Improved consultation, coordination and information-sharing, including, inter alia, documentation on the knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities, within countries among respective focal points and lead institutions relevant to the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant global conventions and programmes, facilitated by the secretariats of the various conventions and other international organizations;

(h) Enhanced interaction between the work programmes of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification, through, *inter alia*, the regional networks and action plans of the latter, drawing upon the elements contained in the note by the Executive Secretary on possible elements of a joint work programme between the two secretariats on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/INF/15) in determining priorities for this interaction;

(i) Partnerships between all relevant stakeholders at all levels, including international organizations and programmes, as well as national and local partners, scientists and land users.

12. The contact group also agreed on the importance of identifying targeted actions in response to identified needs in order to promote the conservation of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of its genetic resources, and to combat the loss of biological diversity in dry and sub-humid lands and its socio-economic consequences.

13. The activity needed to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands will depend on the state of the dry and sub-humid lands resources and the nature of the threats.

14. Hence, a range of options needs to be considered, from sustainable use to *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation. Many dry and sub-humid land resources must be managed at the level of watersheds, or at higher spatial levels, implying community or inter-community, rather than individual, management. This is often further complicated by multiple user groups (e.g., agriculturalists, pastoralists and fisherfolk) and the migratory habits of some animal species and users of biological diversity. Institutions need to be developed or strengthened to provide for biological diversity management at the appropriate scale and for conflict resolution.

15. Sustainable use of biological diversity in dry and sub-humid lands may require the development of alternative livelihoods, and the creation of markets and other incentives to enable and promote responsible use.

16. Within this joint work programme, it is proposed that Parties and other bodies be requested to report on its implementation through appropriate sections of the national reports on biological diversity and desertification prepared for the Conference of the Parties of both conventions as well as other relevant conventions, with due regard to, inter alia, promoting harmonization, avoiding duplication, and enhancing transparency. Thereafter, the implementation of the programme is to be reviewed as determined by the Conference of the Parties.

17. With regard to implementation of the joint work programme at the country level, the contact group recommended that the UNCCD and CBD secretariats, in collaboration with the GEF secretariat and other relevant partners, should facilitate the preparation of suitable project proposals by countries, in order for the projects to qualify for support from the Global Environment Facility, under the umbrella of the joint work programme.

B. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

18. Following up on the various policy recommendations made by the COP with a view to further developing cooperation between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC, as well as on the programme of work of the UNFCCC as defined by decision 8/COP.4, the secretariats of the UNCCD and UNFCCC have continued their periodic consultations with the objective of better defining areas with potential for immediate collaboration. Accordingly, the secretariats have continued their exchange of information and joint participation in technical and scientific meetings. In this regard, the UNCCD secretariat was invited by the UNFCCC secretariat to participate in a workshop to develop draft guidelines for the preparation of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) for least developed countries (LDCs) at a meeting held in Kampala, Uganda from 25 to 27 April 2001. The meeting was attended by UNFCCC focal points from several LDCs (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Sudan, Tuvalu, Uganda and Vanuatu), as well as a number of resource persons.

19. On that occasion the UNCCD secretariat gave a presentation on "lessons learned" with regard to the development and implementation of national action programmes (NAPs) for the UNCCD focusing on process-oriented issues and fundamental principles highlighted in the UNCCD. Participants were eager to learn more about mechanisms for consultation with civil society, as well as about means of increasing public involvement and awareness in the decision-making process relating to adaptation activities. As part of its presentation, the UNCCD secretariat proposed a number of areas where future collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat could be beneficial, beginning with an exchange of lists of focal points in order to promote cooperation at the local level. The need to develop synergies at all levels was encouraged by participants.

20. It was also stressed that a NAPA should be based on existing plans, programmes of action and studies. Given that many national action programmes for the UNCCD provided an opportunity for various stakeholders to identify their priorities during public consultations, several participants at the Kampala meeting suggested that the NAP could be used as a basis for prioritizing adaptive measures within the NAPA, where relevant.

21. Initially, the resource persons who prepared the background document on the NAPA suggested that adequate baseline data, and the technologies to process the data, already exist in most LDCs to allow detailed proposals to be made, either locally or through regional collaboration. While it may be true that certain types of data related to assessing risk of drought and flooding may be available through the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and various donor-funded projects, the UNCCD secretariat disagreed that such data were readily accessible to LDCs, and noted that most LDCs lack the capacity to analyse the data, especially in the area of vulnerability assessment (Reference was made to the findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group). Participants from LDCs agreed with this perspective, and insisted on the need to include capacity-building initiatives in the NAPA process.

22. Ongoing consultations between the UNCCD and UNFCCC secretariats also cover considerations pertaining to the definition and adoption of a joint work programme along the lines of the process launched between the UNCCD and the CBD secretariat. Both secretariats share the same views regarding potential for concrete synergies in this field.

23. The need to engage in a joint work programme to address issues related to sustainable livelihoods of populations in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of developing regions, within the frameworks of the UNCCD and UNFCCC, is prompted by the fact that these two conventions are sustainable development-related and have great similarities. The livelihoods of people in these ecosystems are threatened by various environmental problems, including drought and desertification, for which joint action is necessary in order to enable them to adapt and to sustain themselves. The unity of purpose of the two conventions necessitates engagement in joint programmes based on their respective commonalties. Hence, it is necessary to adopt a unified approach as the most rational way forward in addressing the common objectives of the two conventions. This would facilitate pooling of the conventions' resources for a common course, thus facilitating efficient resource utilization for the implementation of these objectives. A joint effort would also assist the two conventions in tackling the challenges they both face. Furthermore, this approach is consistent with relevant provisions of the UNFCCC and the UNCCD which emphasize the need to meet the specific concerns of developing country Parties, arising from the adverse effects of climate change and/or the impact of the implementation of response measures, especially on various particular categories of countries, including those in arid and semi-arid areas.

24. Accordingly, and having agreed on the principle of a joint collaborative arrangement, the two secretariats are in the process of defining the framework and scope of the intended joint programme.

25. In accordance with the pronouncements made in the two conventions on the occasions of their respective Conferences of the Parties, regarding collaboration, the principal objectives of the joint programme would be as follows:

(a) To pursue the objectives of the UNCCD and the UNFCCC, as they relate to areas prone to drought and/or desertification in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of developing countries;

(b) To develop synergies among the two conventions, considering that they are both sustainable development-related;

(c) To align the main interests of the two conventions and implement actions for harnessing those interests at the local level;

(d) To examine adaptation strategies for arid, semi-arid, dry and sub-humid regions and means of incorporating them in national programmes;

(e) To foster coordination and effective collaboration among local stakeholders in the implementation of relevant aspects of the two conventions, thus avoiding duplication of effort and resources.

26. This programme should target concrete and specific outputs such as a comprehensive framework for collaboration between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC on climate change in arid, semi-arid, dry and sub-humid areas. The programme should also propose modalities for elaborating the joint UNCCD/UNFCCC work programme, to make it more responsive to the crucial issues it is meant to address, especially at country level.

27. Suggestions for developing and promoting synergy with other actors in the implementation of common areas of interest in the two conventions should also be targeted, in order to utilize joint resources effectively. Furthermore, proposals relating to adaptation strategies for the effects of drought and desertification should be tabled, together with modalities for prioritizing the strategies and appropriately linking them with national priorities.

28. Following the joint initiative taken by the UNCCD and UNFCCC executive secretaries on common administrative services and the agreement reached on the principle of this initiative, the Executive Secretary of each organization has appointed senior staff to work out the modalities and the sequencing of such an operation. Consultations with United Nations headquarters and United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) are maintained on this issue with a view to defining a mutually beneficial agreement.

C. Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)

29. Within the framework of their agreed periodic consultations programme, the secretariats of the UNCCD and Ramsar have met on several occasions, either at the occasion of international conferences or at their respective headquarters. These consultations are essentially centred around the implementation of the MOU signed in 1998, and focus on the following issues:

(a) Identification of areas of cooperation between Ramsar, the UNCCD, the CBD and other partners;

(b) Next steps in possible joint activities: identification of specific actions at international, national and local levels/joint work plan.

30. Both secretariats consider it necessary to encourage joint activities in promoting science and technology, and have agreed that the rosters of experts for the two conventions should be linked through the Web sites. It was also agreed that consultative forums will be sought at the country level, to ensure, as far as possible, collaboration in the process of preparation for the COP and other relevant documents. It was also observed that a number of wetlands in arid and semi-arid lands have not been designated as such. In that regard, a list or inventory was deemed necessary, and it was underlined that this exercise could already be started with an initial focus on Africa. Parties would be encouraged to increase the numbers of designated wetlands, for ease of rational management and use.

31. Capacity strengthening was seen as crucial for the implementation of the conventions. Both secretariats agreed that awareness on wetlands and concerns for UNCCD issues can be done through the two secretariats, and ways and means should be explored for developing suitable materials for outreach to various key constituencies.

32. The need to encourage joint activities in promoting science and technology was also noted. In addition to the areas suggested in the MOU, sharing of experiences through early warning systems was also suggested as another key component through which the information already developed by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) can be tapped for use by Parties. The experience gained by UNCCD Parties through CST work on benchmarks and indicators, as well as traditional knowledge, will be exchanged with Ramsar.

33. With respect to coordination of programmes of work between the two conventions, it was decided that each secretariat will encourage Parties and focal points to hold consultations, particularly when preparing national reports. Additionally, they will be encouraged to provide copies of strategies/action programmes or plans on work regarding the two conventions. It was agreed that the two secretariats would make arrangements for holding annual consultative meetings.

34. Among the areas where identification and development of projects were discussed, three were suggested, as follows:

The Okavango Ecosystem: This ecosystem represents an important case for developing joint activities, not only between the two conventions, but also with other relevant actors including the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Okavango is also the largest Ramsar site globally, which is important to Angola, Botswana and Namibia which have jointly signed the Okavango Basin Commission. The meeting was informed that a National Policy Development for Botswana is being undertaken with UNDP financial and technical support, and the technical support of Ramsar. This process is taking on board the concerns of UNCCD, and synergy between the two conventions is being pursued and encouraged at the local level. In addition, the Swiss Government is supporting the development of a management plan for the ecosystem through the Ramsar Bureau which is providing technical support. Other interested partners include the GEF, Denmark and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), while the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is taking the role of policy project development manager.

35. It was accordingly agreed that the UNCCD thematic programme network (TPN) on the integrated management of international river, lake and hydro-geological basins for the regional action programme (RAP) in Africa would be linked to this Okavango initiative.

Lake Chad Basin: This project has already been declared a transboundary Ramsar site, and a GEF project is well under way involving UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as the interested parties at local level, particularly member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). As the Lake Chad Basin Commission is a member of the UNCCD Water TPN, it was agreed that both secretariats would seek ways of closer collaboration in the work of the Lake Chad Basin.

III. COLLABORATION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

A. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

36. In conformity with the relevant decisions of the Conference of the parties and the General Assembly of the United Nations, the UNCCD secretariat liaised extensively with UNEP so as to ensure the provision of a detailed and updated input to the preparatory process to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) on progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21. In this regard, the secretariat has also joined several interactive forums and electronic conferences set up by different Agenda 21 task managers on issues of interest and relevance to the UNCCD implementation process. The secretariat continues its close consultations

with UNEP for the finalization of the final input expected under chapter 12 of Agenda 21, presented to the Conference of the Parties at its third session.

37. Other collaborative initiatives with UNEP include the Dryland Land Degradation Assessment Project (LADA), which aims to provide basic standardized information and methodological tools for land degradation assessment at national, regional and global levels. LADA is a initiative intended to assist in the planning for, and development of, drylands through the provision of better information on land degradation. The project originated from a request made by the UNCCD secretariat to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the preparation of a concept paper entitled "the Overall Assessment of Desertification" (OA3), which was sent by the UNCCD secretariat to the UNEP/GEF office for consideration. The GEF reshaped the proposal into a GEF Block-A project, preparation and planning grant (PDF-A) proposal, renamed LADA, which was given to the FAO for execution. The next step in LADA is the preparation of a PDF-B proposal which would involve wide-range consultations with stakeholders, the identification of strategic technical activities and the formulation of an overall institutional and planning framework (this important initiative is also referred to under the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)). The FAO and the GEF are also key collaborators in this project, among others.

38. A workshop on LADA, held in Rome last December 2000, recognized the need for the project to place land degradation in its broad and cross-cutting perspective. Thus the LADA objectives will have three major components, namely: (i) to provide basic, standardised information, including maps, databases and so on, on the state of land degradation, its causes and its impacts on the environment and human society, and to identify the best remedial measures to combat land degradation, at national, regional and global levels, (ii) to develop methods for land degradation assessment and monitoring at all levels, including methods for use by national organizations at the local level and (iii) to build capacities at all levels for LADA implementation. The workshop gave strong support for the further elaboration of the LADA through preparation of a Project Development and Preparation Facility Block B (PDF-B), to be submitted to the GEF, leading towards early implementation of the project. During the preparation phase, the FAO was urged to take the leadership role, whilst ensuring full engagement by the other interested parties.

39. Moreover, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA), which is already in preparation, and in which the UNCCD secretariat and UNEP are key collaborators, is a process designed to improve the management of the world's natural and managed ecosystems, by helping to provide policy-relevant scientific information on the condition of ecosystems, and options for appropriate responses. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was officially launched on 5 June 2001, coinciding with World Environment Day. The study was launched to provide decision makers with authoritative scientific knowledge concerning the impact of changes to the world's ecosystems on human livelihoods and the environment. It will provide governments, the private sector and local organizations with better information about steps that can be taken to restore the productivity of the world's ecosystems.

40. The UNCCD secretariat has also been closely following the proposed Integrated Land and Water Management programme (ILWM) in Africa. This African land and water initiative has already developed an action plan and has also established a facilitation mechanism. During the discussion session which was held in parallel to COP 4 in Bonn last December, site selection criteria were developed for the

inception phase of the ILWM, and at the request of the World Bank, some African country Parties and relevant intergovernmental subregional organizations identified sites in the various regions in Africa where the initial phase of the programme would be started, in collaboration with the GEF Implementing Agencies. Mechanisms for implementing the ILWM programme were also considered during this session.

41. The UNCCD secretariat attended the 21st Governing Council of UNEP and took an active part in the debate held under agenda item 4 (a), "Support for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa: 1999-2000". During this session, and at the request of the Governing Council, the UNCCD Executive Secretary made a presentation on desertification-poverty-development nexus, and another one on natural disasters and their effects on human welfare, particularly in areas affected by drought and desertification.

B. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

42. Building on a long tradition of cooperation, the UNCCD secretariat and the WMO have developed numerous joint activities. In that context, the last Congress of the WMO, held in June 2001, reaffirmed the high level priority given to the UNCCD process and pledged additional financial and technical assistance to support UNCCD-related activities.

43. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the UNCCD secretariat adopted decisions on a number of issues including the approval of UNEP's proposal for a second phase of the survey and evaluation of networks involving a pilot in-depth survey in the southern African subregion. WMO is part of the consortium entrusted with the task of carrying out this work.

44. Furthermore, the CST re-appointed the ad hoc panel on early warning systems (EWSs) to further examine EWSs performance, methods for analysing vulnerability, exchange of information between institutions, and measures for preparedness. WMO is also a member of this ad hoc panel.

45. Within the framework of their ongoing periodic consultations schedule, the WMO was represented at the following meetings organized by the UNCCD secretariat:

(a) Fourth session of the Conference of the Parties where the Secretary-General addressed the plenary session of COP 4 (11 to 22 December 2001 in Bonn, Germany);

(b) Meeting of the ad hoc panel on early warning systems (Bonn, 31 May to 2 June 2000);

(c) Meeting on the preparation of a subregional action programme (SRAP) to combat desertification in the Aral Sea Basin (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 18 to 21 July 2000);

(d) African Regional Conference to prepare for COP 4 (Algiers, 22 to 24 October 2000);

(e) Meeting of the network for integrated management of international rivers, lakes and hydro-geological basins in the context of the regional action programme to combat desertification in Africa (Accra, 29 November to 1 December 2000).

46. The WMO has also been very active in field information and public awareness activities. Amongst the principal activities undertaken in this regard, it is worth mentioning the following:

(a) For COP 4, a publication entitled "Early Warning Systems for Drought Preparedness and Drought Management" was prepared and several hundred copies were distributed. WMO also addressed a press briefing session on this topic;

(b) The WMO funded the reproduction of 8000 copies of the complete "UNCCD Kit" and 5000 copies of the comics booklet "Lupo Alberto".

47. WMO plays an active role in the Dryland Land Degradation Assessment initiative; it took part in the international workshop organized by the FAO in this context (5 to 7 December 2000). The Council of WMO agreed that weather and climate issues should be appropriately factored into the proposed LADA initiative, and accordingly it requested the Secretary-General to ensure WMO's continued participation in the initiative (Further information on this initiative is provided under section III, A of this document).

48. Finally, WMO assists the UNCCD secretariat in a wide range of activities, amongst which the following are the most important:

(a) The preparation of national reports;

(b) The assessment of boundary and pilot projects;

(c) The assessment of subregional and regional action programmes;

(d) The provision of financial and technical assistance to the UNCCD secretariat to help in meeting staffing needs.

49. The Executive Council of WMO invited the Secretary-General to continue the active participation of WMO in UNCCD activities and to keep members of the Council fully informed of ongoing developments in matters relating to the Convention.

C. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

50. The importance of capacity-building, education and public awareness in efforts to combat desertification are clearly highlighted in the text and spirit of the UNCCD. Against this background the UNCCD secretariat has engaged in intensive consultations with UNESCO in order to define a joint programme of cooperation centred on activities that would maximize the comparative advantage of the involvement of UNESCO in the implementation of the Convention.

51. Accordingly, and as reported during the fourth session of the COP, the UNCCD secretariat and UNESCO agreed to develop educational "desertification kits" in three languages (English, French and Spanish), to be tested at primarily school level in various drought and desertification affected countries. The educational kits will comprise a youth guide, a teachers's guide and several case studies and two comics booklets highlighting the problems of desertification.

52. The first phase of this project has been finalized with the support of the Italian and the Swiss Governments. Relying on UNESCO's network of associated schools, the pilot phase of this project will be launched in several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America with a view to expanding it in future to all regions covered by the Convention.

D. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

53. With the objective of strengthening the cooperation between the UNCCD secretariat and the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) of the United Nations Development Programme in the context of support provided by both organizations to African affected countries, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been elaborated jointly by the UNCCD secretariat and UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and was signed in April 2001.

54. The MOU covers the following areas of activity with a view to fostering the implementation process of the UNCCD in Africa, with an emphasis on the national level:

(a) Strengthening of cooperation to provide support to affected country Parties in Africa at national level: (i) organization of national awareness seminars, (ii) finalisation of national action programmes, (iii) organization of consultative meetings with donor countries and international agencies for the launching and implementation of national action programmes;

(b) Cooperation for the development of joint initiatives and synergistic programmes dealing with desertification, drought, biodiversity, climate change and wetlands protection in dryland zones;

(c) Strengthening of cooperation to provide support to affected country Parties in Africa building on relevant UNDP-administered activities such as Capacity 21.

55. The UNCCD secretariat and UNDP's RBA are actually in the process of launching activities in order to implement the MOU, based on an agreed tentative agenda for the period 2001-2003.

56. In order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention in other affected regions, the UNCCD secretariat and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP have also engaged in consultations with a view to adopting a memorandum of understanding. Likewise, the UNCCD secretariat will pursue its contacts with UNDP and its other regional bureaus (Asia and Europe) in order to identify concrete opportunities to strengthen collaboration in support of the implementation of the UNCCD in the concerned countries.

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